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ABSTRACT

Representatives of strategic stakeholder groups who make decisions affecting continuing higher education (CHE) were surveyed to determine their perceptions regarding the role and impact of CHE. These types of institutions participated: two state universities, five community/technical colleges, two branch/regional campuses, and one private college. Eleven presidents/deans, 19 trustees/members of the board of directors, and 8 state legislators were interviewed. Most respondents indicated they were familiar with some aspect of CHE. The area of CHE with which most respondents were most familiar was the programs and services oriented toward provision of occupational skill and job readiness training and assistance to business and industry in meeting their knowledge, applied technology, and skill needs. The most substantive role ascribed to CHE by respondents was the role of providing education and training for job placement or promotion and providing assistance to business and industry. Respondents generally displayed a lack of knowledge about the characteristics of CHE students. Although legislators indicated they received little or no information about CHE, presidents/deans and trustees/board members generally indicated they actually received a good deal of information. Presidents/deans and trustees/board members appeared to be quite positive about their CHE programs and services. (Appendixes include a list of institutions participating, interview protocols, and 22 references.) (YLB)

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ED 360 552

FINAL REPORT

OCHEA STUDY OF THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS

MAY 1993

SPONSORED BY THE OHIO CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iv
PURPOSE AND METHOD 1
- Study Purposes 1
- Study Methods 1
- Structure of the Report 2

SURVEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS 3
- Respondents' Familiarity with Continuing Higher Education 3
  - Responses from Presidents/Deans 3
  - Responses from Trustees/Board Members 3
  - Responses from Legislators 4
- The Mission and Role of Continuing Higher Education 6
  - Education for Labor Market Participants, Business and Industry 7
  - Serving Professionals within the Community 8
  - CHE as an Alternative Educational Experience 9
  - CHE as Personal Enrichment 10
- Expected Benefits Derived from CHE 11
  - Benefits to the Community At Large 11
  - Benefits to Community Organizations 11
  - Serving the Needs of the Parent Institution 12
- Perceptions of Future Needs for CHE 13
- Integration of CHE into Mission of Parent Institution 13
- Information Needs of Stakeholder Groups 13
  - Decision Contexts 14
  - Information Currently Received 16
    - Responses of Presidents/Deans 16
    - Responses of Trustees/Board Members 17
  - Respondents' Information Needs 18
- Need for Information Regarding The Outcomes of CHE Programs and Services 21
  - Educational Outcomes 21
  - Information on Labor Market Outcomes for Participants 21
  - Outcomes for Business and Industry 22

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS 23
- Discussion of Findings and Conclusions 25
  - Issues Related to Questions of Role 25
  - Meta-Role Issues 25
  - CHE and Economic Development 25
  - CHE and Personal Enrichment 26
  - The Modern Need for CHE 27
- Issues Related to Information Needs 27

APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING .....

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS .....

APPENDIX C. RELATED READINGS .....

FOREWORD

The Ohio Continuing Higher Education Association (OCHEA) is an organization which is vitally interested in the quality and impact of continuing education in colleges and universities in Ohio. Reflecting this interest, OCHEA, through its research and data collection committee, funded a research study which resulted in the following report. The association and its members will use this information to plan new initiatives for collecting and using program impact data.

The project was a result of many hours of dedicated volunteer service. Ten OCHEA members representing eleven institutions acted as interviewers. Nearly forty key decision-makers--Presidents, Deans, Trustees/Board Members and Legislators--shared their viewpoints and insights with the interviewers.

Columbus State Community College provided coordination service for the project at no charge. Dr. John Meighan, Director of Business and Industry Training, gave leadership to meetings in which the project was formulated and interview protocols were arranged. Hal Merz, Development and Marketing Representative, served as liaison between OCHEA and the consultant, also assisting with the review of the project report. Jo Ann Farley of Farley Associates served ably as the project consultant, developing the data collection instruments, analyzing the information, and producing the project report.

On behalf of OCHEA, the Research and Data Collection Committee is happy to acknowledge and express appreciation to all those who contributed to the report.

Sharon Brown
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REPORT ON OCHEA SURVEY OF INFORMATION NEEDS

OF STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING

CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION

During the spring of 1992, the Ohio Continuing Higher Education Association (OCHEA) commissioned a survey of representatives of strategic stakeholder groups who make decisions affecting continuing higher education (CHE) in postsecondary institutions throughout the state. The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of these key stakeholder groups regarding the role and impact of continuing higher education. At OCHEA's request, Columbus State Community College agreed to manage the study and contracted with an independent consultant, Joanne Farley of Farley Associates, to assist in developing the survey instruments, in analyzing survey responses, and in developing a report detailing the survey findings.

Institutions from various constituencies were contacted to invite their participation in the product. The following types of institutions were represented among those who agreed to participate:

- 2 state universities
- 5 community/technical colleges
- 2 branch/regional campuses
- 1 private college

Several institutions indicated interest but were unable to participate. OCHEA volunteers conducted face to face interviews with strategic actors within their home institutions, including Presidents/Deans and Trustees and Members of the Board of Directors. Volunteers also interviewed state legislators many of whom are assigned to key committees dealing with education issues.

The following is a summary of the major findings and recommendations contained in the report of survey results.

Actors' Familiarity with CHE

Most respondents indicated that they were familiar with some aspect of CHE. The area of CHE with which most respondents (particularly Trustees/Board Members) stated they are most familiar are the programs and services oriented toward provision of occupational skill and job readiness training and assistance to business and industry in meeting their knowledge, applied technology and skill needs. Some respondents noted that they were most familiar with the credit programs offered by CHE. However, several legislators indicated they had no familiarity whatsoever with CHE as provided by postsecondary institutions in their districts.

The findings imply that there is much room for OCHEA and other CHE representatives to design and put into action a public information campaign to enhance awareness among strategic actors of the rich and various programs and activities offered by CHE in Ohio. It is particularly important that legislators who influence resource flow to postsecondary institutions have some substantive understanding of the range of services which CHE programs provide to communities and Ohio residents.

Actors' Perceptions of the Roles and Mission of CHE

Responses to questions about the primary role and mission of CHE within parent institutions generally fell into the following categories: 1) to provide job training to actual or potential labor market participants and assistance to business and industry; 2) to provide credit and noncredit programs to those who cannot or who choose not to enroll in traditional, four-year postsecondary institutions; 3) to provide community residents with a source of personal enrichment and life long learning; and 4) to provide the community generally with educational programming not available elsewhere, particularly certification of professionals and training for social service organizations.

By far, the role of providing education and training for job placement or promotion and providing assistance to business and industry was the most substantive role ascribed to CHE by respondents. Yet, only one or two respondents tied this role to the larger community role of economic development. Other responses either defined the role of CHE in organizational terms, e.g., CHE should provide noncredit courses not available elsewhere on campus, or were so vague as to provide little direction to CHE representatives grappling with the issue of identifying a distinctive role for their CHE programs and activities.

Since CHE is comprised of a number of diverse and distinctive program areas and functional programs, e.g., nursing education and personal interest classes, it is not surprising perhaps that respondents were vague about a primary mission and role for CHE. However, the researcher strongly recommends that OCHEA and other CHE representatives set about the task of better defining in conceptual and practical terms the goals and roles of primary components that comprise CHE. To put it bluntly, you cannot "sell" what you cannot describe or define.

OCHEA should consider establishing a long-term strategic planning process which incorporates Task Groups oriented toward coming to a consensual statement of what their respective CHE programmatic components substantively seek to achieve, and what individual or community benefits they expect these components to generate. These identified roles and benefits then need to be integrated into a broader conceptualization of the subject matter and practical functions of CHE.

Actors' Awareness of the Characteristics of CHE Consumers

Respondents generally displayed a lack of knowledge about the characteristics of CHE students. Most described them in terms such as "those who want to get ahead", "people who are goal driven", "older individuals who want to keep learning". While there may be some truth to those descriptions, they do not suffice for a detailed understanding of the market segment or target groups most in need or most likely to utilize CHE programs and services. Additionally, legislators had no idea of how many residents in their districts attend CHE programs or services. While not expressly stated, legislators appeared to have no better information regarding the type or number of business and industry, social service agencies, or professional organizations that directly or indirectly benefit from CHE programs and services.

The researcher again recommends that OCHEA members develop a plan to generate information (beyond enrollment data) that provides a better understanding of who uses CHE and the magnitude of user groups as well as of their utilization of CHE. This information is essential if CHE representatives want to demonstrate the scope of the potential impact or value CHE has for communities and community residents.

Actors' Perceptions of Information Needs Regarding CHE

While legislators indicated that they currently receive no or little information about CHE (e.g., types of programs offered, magnitude of use of CHE), Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members generally indicated that they actually receive a good bit of information. Most of this information relates to enrollment figures, listings of program offerings, some cost data, and staffing information.

Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members stated that their most important CHE needs relate to data including the comparative cost-effectiveness of programs, the types and level of educational needs existing in communities for CHE types of programs, the extent to which CHE programs meet these needs, and more detailed and refined enrollment data.

Throughout survey responses, needs assessment data emerged either implicitly or explicitly as information which respondents need or want for making budget, organizational and other types of decisions related to CHE. The researcher suggests that it is only within the context of needs assessment data that enrollment and completion figures take on meaning and indicate something about the value of CHE programs and services.

Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members also stated that they would like to receive more outcome information from CHE programs. Specific types of outcomes identified included those relating to job placement/promotion of students, increased productivity measures of employers, and educational outcomes including both final and intermediate outcomes. Given how much importance some respondents placed on CHE as providing personal enrichment and life long learning opportunities, it can be assumed that outcome data on these classes may be useful as well.

The researcher thinks it is critical that CHE programs begin generating some forms of outcome data to meet the information needs of strategic actors as well as to be able to evaluate program quality and impact and demonstrate the value of programs and services. However, doing so will entail that CHE practitioners first develop outcome definitions and measurement procedures for those outcomes not typically measured. Personal enrichment and intermediate educational outcomes are some examples.

Actors' General Perceptions of CHE

Review of responses across questions throughout the surveys indicated that Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members appeared to be quite positive about their CHE programs and services. Presidents and Deans indicated that CHE programs are integral to the parent institution's ability to serve its overarching mission and role. Moreover, all respondents indicated that by being more flexible and responsive than traditional credit departments, CHE serves the critical need of addressing emerging and changing needs of the community, of community institutions and of individuals.

Thus, even without needs assessment and outcome data, these groups appear to have some level of commitment to CHE. However, fuller and more substantive role definitions, added to quality needs assessment and outcome data on CHE program performance, may ensure that this commitment grows and is translated into actual organizational resources for CHE.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

During the Spring of 1992, the Ohio Continuing Higher Education Association (OCHEA) commissioned a survey of representatives of strategic stakeholder groups who make decisions affecting continuing higher education in postsecondary institutions throughout the state. At OCHEA's request, Columbus State Community College agreed to manage the study and contracted with an independent consultant to assist in developing the survey instruments, in analyzing survey responses, and in developing a final report detailing the survey findings.

Study Purposes

The major purposes of the study were to address the following questions:

1. What are the awareness levels and interpretations of respondent groups regarding the primary roles and functions served by continuing higher education?

2. What are the specific needs of respondent groups for information about continuing higher education? What are the contexts in which stakeholder representatives utilize information about continuing higher education?

3. What types of information about the impacts, consequences or outcomes of continuing higher education would respondent groups find useful and relevant to their informational needs?

4. What information should institutions of continuing higher education be providing respondent groups to obtain their support for and commitment to continuing higher education?

Study Methods

Data with which to address these questions was collected through face-to-face interviews with representatives of the stakeholder groups noted: Presidents or Deans of postsecondary institutions having a continuing higher education department or component; Trustees and/or members of the Board of Directors of such institutions; and state legislators who have such institutions in their districts.

The survey was conducted by OCHEA members who volunteered to interview the Presidents, trustees/Board Members and state legislators affiliated with the respective institutions in which the volunteers work.

Ten (10) OCHEA representatives representing eleven postsecondary institutions conducted interviews for the study. These volunteers identified the stakeholder representatives they believed to be appropriate to include as interview respondents. A letter was sent by OCHEA requesting the participation of these individuals in the study. The volunteers then contacted the potential respondents at their respective institutions and legislative districts to schedule interviews. The volunteers then conducted the interviews and submitted the completed interview protocols to Columbus State Community College.

The volunteer interviewers were able to obtain interview data from a total of eleven (11) presidents and/or deans, eight (8) state legislators and 19 Trustees or members of Boards of Directors. Most of the legislators serve on legislative committees or subcommittees that relate to higher education. A list of the institutions represented in the final sample of all survey respondents is provided in Appendix A.

The interview protocols (included in Appendix B) were developed by the consultant with assistance from Columbus State Community College personnel. An initial draft was disseminated to several continuing higher education representatives for review and comments regarding question structure, content and language. The instruments were then finalized and made available to the volunteer interviewers.

The consultant also performed a review of recent literature in continuing education, especially regarding information and evaluation issues. A summary of the articles reviewed appears in Appendix C.

Structure of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide OCHEA and other audiences with the survey findings and conclusions.

While the interview protocols were standardized for each group, data collection was primarily qualitative in nature since the questions were unstructured and encouraged respondents to respond in any manner they thought appropriate and relevant. Therefore, this report makes no attempt to report survey responses in quantitative terms. Instead, it attempts to present major themes and groupings of issues as reflected in survey responses. In doing so, the report relies heavily on use of respondent responses to illustrate such themes and groupings. The researcher slightly edited interviewers' notes to make them quotable for this report and to ensure the anonymity of the response.

SURVEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the major findings and conclusions derived from analysis and synthesis of responses to interview questions.

Respondents' Familiarity with Continuing Higher Education

OCHEA sponsors of the study wanted to find out with which aspects or components of continuing higher education (CHE) Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members are most familiar. A question to this effect was included in the interviews conducted for the two respondent groups.

Responses from Presidents/Deans

Presidents and Deans most frequently identified (1) credit programs or courses offered through credit instruction in academic departments, and (2) services to business and industry, as the areas of CHE with which they are most familiar.

The respondents were also asked how they had come to be more knowledgeable about and familiar with those CHE components they identified. Their responses fell into the following categories (in no particular order):

1. Talking to CHE Directors and other personnel about their programs and activities.
2. Discussion and information received at staff meetings.
3. Talking to people who had utilized CHE services and programs.
4. General talk around campus and word of mouth.

Responses from Trustees/Board Members

Responses obtained from Trustees and Board Members indicate that they were much more familiar with those components of CHE that provide services to business and industry and/or provide employment-related education and training to individuals. A few responses were related to other aspects of CHE such as fine arts instruction and remedial or general educational programming. Some examples of the responses received include:

- Industry programs - growth opportunity for college.
- Large companies that are receiving training in our area.
- That portion which meets needs of employers to upgrade skills of employees and employees' needs to maintain employability.
- Give people a chance to return and take regular courses and enhance abilities.

One board member reported a lack of familiarity with continuing education on the campus. Most board members and trustees had some acquaintance with CHE.

When asked how they have come to be more knowledgeable or familiar with these specific components, their responses grouped around the following areas:

1. Information shared at Board meetings.
2. Literature disseminated by the CHE Departments or the institution.
3. Discussions with individuals enrolled in CHE.
4. Word of mouth in the community and on campus.
5. Newspaper releases.
6. Lists of CHE course offerings.
7. Personal experience with CHE either through enrollment in CHE programs or through use of CHE employee training services.

Several of the Trustee and Board member respondents pointed out that they felt knowledgeable about CHE because they had an interest in it and took the initiative to acquire more information about CHE programs and activities. Another respondent noted that the level of awareness and knowledge of CHE is dependent upon the orientation provided to trustees in assuming their responsibilities for the institution.

Responses from Legislators

Legislators were asked a slightly different question: "how familiar are you with the type of activities performed by CHE programs at postsecondary institutions in your district?". Three of the seven respondents stated a low level of familiarity (two replied "only somewhat familiar" and one replied "not at all familiar") and three indicated a higher level of familiarity (two replied "fairly familiar" and one replied "very familiar"). Moreover, in discussions regarding the role of CHE, several legislators emphasized that they are unclear as to what CHE does or what it provides on postsecondary campuses. Clearly, some attention needs to be given to heightening legislators' awareness of CHE and its operations at postsecondary institutions within their districts.

Legislators were also asked what they think are the characteristics of persons attending CHE. A number of the responses focused on the motivations of persons in enrolling in CHE rather than on other types of characteristics. Thus, their responses indicated that individuals who enroll in CHE do so:

1. To better themselves, to broaden their knowledge and to enrich their personal lives; and,
2. To obtain job training or retraining or to upgrade existing work skills.

Other responses indicated that legislators think that CHE students are individuals who return to school to enroll in particular programs and/or to obtain degrees. Finally, one respondent commented that he/she thought that more women than men enrolled in CHE programs and activities.

The interviewers asked respondents if they have any sense of how many individuals in their district are enrolled in CHE programs. Four of the seven replied "no idea at all". Another respondent replied by identifying the number of institutions in his/her district having CHE programs but did not provide an estimate of the number of CHE students. The one respondent said enrollment was substantial but could not provide any estimates of numbers.

What was noticeably absent from legislators' responses was any sense that they have profiles of the groups and subgroups who enroll in CHE programs. Since many of the legislators served on education and/or higher education committees and subcommittees, it would seem important that they have information regarding who needs and who wants to enroll in continuing education and in what components of CHE. It would also seem important for them to know, even in general terms, how many community residents and the percentage of all postsecondary students who are CHE students.

The Mission and Role of Continuing Higher Education

One of the primary questions OCHEA wanted to address in the study was how study representatives think of, characterize, or interpret what CHE is and what roles and functions it serves on their respective campuses.

After review of the data, the researcher decided to combine responses obtained for each of three questions. The decision was based on the fact that responses to each question broke out into similar categories and were thus, indistinguishable across the three questions. Moreover, since the questions are all logically related, a synthesis of the responses obtained to each provides a more holistic portrait of the major missions and roles which respondents think CHE does and should serve within communities. These questions included the following:

1. What did respondents think they would say in response to the question of what it is CHE is or does on their respective campuses or in the case of legislators, on postsecondary campuses in their districts?

2. What role did respondents think CHE should be serving on the campuses of their respective institutions (asked only of Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members)?

3. How would respondents describe the concrete benefits CHE is expected to provide to community residents, to business and industry and to other organizations in their respective areas?

The information obtained from asking these questions across respondent groups revealed two interesting perspectives that are "meta-role" issues. The first was the fact that a number of respondents strictly defined CHE as those programs and services offered by either a particular unit or department within the parent institution. Thus, for example, one respondent noted that CHE does not include business and industry training because "that is provided elsewhere on campus". On the other hand, some respondents interpreted CHE to be anything and everything the institution has to offer. Illustrating this perspective was the respondent who stated that "everything we do here is continuing education!".

The second meta-issue relates to the way in which a number of respondents defined the role of CHE as generally serving any and all of the educational needs of the community not currently served by traditional 4-year degree programs. These responses reflected a tendency to be more specific about what CHE is not rather than what it is.

Some possible implications of these meta-issues are discussed in the final section of the report.

Education for Labor Market Participants, Business and Industry

CHE's role in providing education and training for present and potential labor market participants and for local businesses and industry was a major theme of the respondents. In terms of education and training for individuals, respondents emphasized that CHE typically offers basic or remedial educational skill training, employability development, occupational training, training for upgrading of current skills, and training in nontraditional work skills such as critical thinking, team building, and problem-solving. They also noted that CHE can help individuals who want to change careers and enter new occupational areas.

A sampling of some of the responses obtained in this area include:

- CHE promotes evening and Saturday/weekend credit instruction to advance job skills. [President/Dean]
- Encouraging people to advance skills they possess or obtain new skills to fit a specific job market. [President/Dean]
- CHE encourages people to advance skills they possess or obtain new skills to fit a specific job market. [Trustee/Board Member]
- It provides education for a changing economy and basic skills to survive and thrive in the world of work. [Trustee/Board Member]
- CHE programs give adults without marketable skills, new skills as the economy changes from one emphasizing heavy industry to one emphasizing service and high-technology. [Legislator]
- CHE provides training and retraining for people to go to work in different areas and to upgrade training. [Legislator]
- Retraining programs for people who have just lost a job. [Legislator]

Serving Professionals within the Community

Respondents also pointed out that CHE provides and/or should provide professional groups in the community with a source of education and training where members can acquire and update their credentialing and meet requirements for continuing education. This function not only provides the individual professional with the education and training he or she needs, but also serves the community by helping it to maintain well qualified and competent professional groups such as teachers, health professionals, and even lawyers. Specific areas which CHE should address included the health professions, e.g., LPN and radiology programs, and the legal profession.

While individuals need employment-related education and skill training, area employers need an available workforce comprised of individuals who have adequate conceptual skills, up-to-date technical skills and a number of support skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and team work skills. They also need a stable workforce which is willing and able to commit long-term to the organization.

Respondents indicated that CHE has an important role to play in helping business and industry by providing the education necessary to develop and maintain such a workforce. Some employers attempt to establish in-house education and training components for their employees. However, with the rapid transformations in technology that are occurring and the continual emergence of new instructional technologies, maintaining the staff and equipment necessary to provide quality education and training can be extremely expensive. The literature as well as some of the survey respondents in this study stated that business and industry can receive better education and training services at a much lower cost from CHE programs. Indeed, a number of CHE departments and centers provide customized education and training for businesses and industries.

Respondents also noted that business and industry can and do use CHE to learn about new technologies and to introduce new technologies into the workplace.

Some examples of the responses obtained pertinent to CHE's role in serving business and industry include:

- CHE provides assistance to business/industry institutions to assist with specific employee needs - on/off campus, credit/noncredit, customized or traditional programs. [President/Dean]

- CHE assists in providing a well trained labor force to enhance the competitive position of the company. [President/Dean]

- CHE provides company training, advanced training courses, new methods of doing things, training on new equipment in the market place, new methods of office management. [Trustee/Board Member]

- The flexibility of CHE gives it the ability to quickly shift programs. Has the ability to keep up with changes in demand. [Trustee/Board Member]

- CHE provides business and industry with a literate workforce, an advanced workforce. [Legislator]

The emphasis given the role of CHE as a source of education and training to labor market participants, business and industry as well as the substantive examples provided, leads the researcher to conclude that respondents have good familiarity with, and a fairly concrete image of what it is that CHE does in this area and how it serves these consumer groups.

CHE as an Alternative Educational Experience

Respondents in all groups also heavily emphasized that CHE represents and serves as an alternative educational process for those individuals who cannot or who do not want to attend traditional college programs. According to respondents, this is one of the more important ways in which CHE can address community needs. Respondents noted several ways in which CHE increases the access of nontraditional students to educational activities. These include:

1. Scheduling of classes. A number of CHE departments offer classes and seminars in the evenings and on weekends, opening up access to individuals who have full-time day jobs or other constraints on attending classes during the work day.

2. Open enrollment in courses. CHE departments frequently offer open enrollment for classes and programs, meaning that individuals have few prerequisites to meet and can enroll in the activity when able to do so.

3. Noncredit courses. While most respondents noted that CHE consists of both credit and noncredit programs, several appeared to equate CHE with noncredit programming. Usually, noncredit programming is not directed toward a degree and in many instances, is designed with the adult learner in mind. Consequently, the instructional methods are more amenable to individuals who want to learn but who have not been in formal schooling for some time.

4. Location of courses. Many institutions offer CHE classes and seminars at satellite locations throughout the community. This undoubtedly makes classes more accessible to individuals who live some distance from the main campus and who lack transportation and/or who have serious time constraints.

Respondents also noted that some students are simply not ready to go directly into a 4-year college or university immediately after high school. They suggested that CHE can provide such students with opportunities to experiment and adjust to life after high school in a nonthreatening context. Indeed, some respondents suggested that frequently, students who have no intention of pursuing a degree but who enroll in CHE programs are encouraged by their experiences in CHE to pursue their education by enrolling in postsecondary degree programs either in 4-year institutions or in community or technical colleges.

As these responses reflect, respondents indicated that a primary function of CHE is to provide services to current or future labor force participants which include basic education and remedial education; job training for individuals who are entering the labor market for the first time; and, job training to retrain or upgrade the job skills that individuals already possess.

- CHE responds to rapidly changing community needs and interests - ones that do not lend themselves to credit programs. [President/Dean]

- CHE should provide credit and noncredit educational opportunities to meet local community needs. It should be delivered on and off campus using both traditional and nontraditional scheduling, methodology and media. [President/Dean]

- CHE provides ongoing and continuing education to those who do not want to go directly to a 4-year college. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o CHE provides opportunities for adults to come back to school and explore new options. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o More courses need to be offered at night to aid adult and continuing education. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o (CHE offers opportunities for) older or retired folks wanting to pick up some classes at minimal or reduced cost. [Legislator]

- o CHE serves any student that continues education after high school. CHE can mean postsecondary education and a place where students can return after being out of school for a number of years. [Legislator]

CHE as Personal Enrichment

Another theme emerging from the survey responses was the need for individuals to continue the process of self-discovery and of learning. Respondents, particularly Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members, indicated that individuals have a need to know they can continue to learn after their formal schooling ends, and need to experience the satisfaction of continued learning, whatever the subject matter may be.

According to respondents, CHE courses and programs should and do provide opportunities for persons to continue the process of acquiring new knowledge and new skills in a variety of areas. In doing so, the suggestion was that CHE has an inherent value and worth independent of external rewards such as degrees and certifications.

The following provide some examples of respondents' comments regarding the role of CHE in providing personal enrichment opportunities:

- o Not necessarily directed toward degree but filling in gaps or taking courses in order to meet changing life needs. [President/Dean]

- o CHE should be viewed as life long learning. It is a stepping stone that leads in all directions. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o Heighten appreciation for realms of knowledge - both cultural, vocational, or even metaphysical. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o Provides cultural enrichment. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o Education is a life long learning experience. Many public institutions offer courses for our own knowledge and education, i.e., woodworking. [Legislator]

- o Nonacademic courses that increase/develop life skills. [Legislator]

It was interesting to note that respondents did not offer many substantive examples of concrete ways in which CHE offers personal enrichment opportunities for individuals. One respondent did mention woodworking and another identified the fine arts as examples of areas of personal enrichment. Another area specifically mentioned by several respondents was that of life skills or life management skills.

However, respondents typically spoke in generalities. This may be due to the fact that respondents were focusing on function, i.e., the act of learning, rather than on form, i.e., learning a particular subject matter and/or set of skills.

Expected Benefits Derived from CHE

Respondents were asked to describe the concrete benefits to community residents and organizations that they expect to be provided by CHE. Most of the responses parallelled the categories which emerged in responses to role questions. Thus, emphasis was given to expectations that:

1. CHE will enable individuals to acquire or upgrade new or enhanced occupational and work-related skills for employment or promotion. It will also provide professional groups with a source of education and training to meet initial and ongoing credentialing requirements.

2. CHE will make education more accessible to those individuals who want or need to enroll in degree or nondegree programs and/or in programs offered in nontraditional settings that have nontraditional scheduling.

3. CHE will provide business and industry with a source of education and training to employees that will enhance the productivity and quality of production of their companies. CHE will also provide services that will enable business and industry to integrate and adapt to new technologies.

4. CHE will provide individuals with opportunities for personal enrichment and development and life long learning.

However, throughout the survey, respondents identified or suggested a range of other benefits which are or might be derived from CHE programs and services.

Benefits to the Community At Large

Across the three groups, respondents noted that CHE provides some important benefits to the community at large. Some of their comments included:

- CHE serves as an additional tool when attracting new industry into the community. [President/Dean]

- CHE results in an increased tax base from educated students. Causes an economic multiplier effect. [Trustee/Board Member]

- An educated workforce is beneficial to the entire community - for example, results in leadership in schools and volunteerism in community organizations. [Legislator]

Benefits to Community Organizations

In addition to serving the community as a whole, respondents also identified areas in which CHE is expected to serve community organizations. A sampling of responses are provided below.

- o Serves community organizations such as nursing homes, JTPA and police departments. [President/Dean]

- o CHE is pertinent to social service agencies - the college functions as the educational mid-wife for their human potential improvement goals.

- o CHE provides general training for service/non-profit agencies. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o CHE allows access of organizations to research and faculty. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o CHE gets students involved in trade associations or various business organizations. [Trustee/Board Member]

- o CHE assists Chamber of Commerce, hospitals and primary and secondary education. [Legislators]

While respondents did not often provide explanations regarding how CHE has benefitted these organizations, they clearly think that benefits were provided.

Serving the Needs of the Parent Institution

While not identifying the area as a part of the mission of CHE, respondents noted that parent institutions obtain concrete benefits from having CHE departments or units on their campuses. These benefits generally fell into four categories.

1. CHE serves as a feeding ground to other institutional departments. Respondents indicated that students frequently come into CHE due to a particular and specific interest, but upon exposure to the wide range of offerings of the institution as a whole, often enroll in other campus programs.

2. CHE frequently brings visibility and a positive image to the parent institution. CHE programs and activities frequently include extensive involvement and cooperation with community organizations and groups. Consequently, they are discussed within the community and are frequently publicized by the media in the community. In this sense, CHE often serves as a highly visible link between the parent institution and the community and increases residents' awareness of both.

3. CHE is frequently a money maker for the parent institution. Besides the additional tuition fees which CHE brings into the parent institution, it also brings in consulting contracts from business and industry. The influx of funds to the department and/or the institution is very helpful in a time of decreasing resources for higher education. Additionally, these business contacts may be a source for increasing the development funds for the institution.

Perceptions of Future Needs for CHE

Legislators were asked "What types of continuing education needs do you think adults in your constituency currently have or will have in the near future?" They were also asked what role they think CHE should serve in addressing identified needs.

By far and away the predominant response was that adults are in need and will continue to be in need of education and training to prepare them for the job market and/or to help them upgrade their skills to meet a changing economy. The respondents identifying these needs believed that CHE should have a major role in delivering these educational programs and services. Indeed, one legislator noted that the State should use the existing structure of community colleges, technical colleges and CHE departments to deliver these services where they are needed most throughout the State.

One respondent disagreed with this assessment. The respondent stated that more education and training is and will be needed in the fields of emergency medical technology and in the medical field in general. However, the respondent indicated that these areas should be taught in the schools (presumably public high schools and/or secondary vocational schools). He also asked why these have to be taught in technical colleges.

Some respondents replied that the needs of adults for CHE will be access needs. They emphasized that CHE should be made more available and accessible to all areas in the State where residents are in need of the kinds of education and training CHE can provide.

Finally, one respondent simply and honestly stated he just did not know what the current or future needs for CHE are among individuals in his district.

Integration of CHE into Mission of Parent Institution

Discussions with OCHEA representatives prior to the survey suggested that some CHE personnel believe that CHE is considered to be the "step-child" of the parent institution. Consequently, Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members were asked how they see the mission for CHE integrating into the broader organizational mission of the parent institutions. Many respondents stated that CHE is an integral component of the institution and that its mission is important to the broader mission of the institution. A number of respondents indicated that CHE fills out the institutional mission by providing the diversity and flexibility needed to address the full range of educational needs of community residents. Two respondents noted that CHE provides a practical and technical dimension to what is otherwise academic and "artsy" learning at the institution. However, some Trustee/Board Members candidly suggested that their institutions needed to give a higher priority to CHE programs. The following comments illustrate this point:

- The entire structure of higher education is evolving and may change a great deal over the next several years. Continuing education can help "fill-in the gaps" in our more traditional programs.

- This has not been a campus which encourages continuing education courses or training for the community. It is a matter of philosophy.

Information Needs of Stakeholder Groups

One of the primary purposes of this study was to identify the needs of respondent groups for information concerning CHE programs and services. This section describes what respondents had to say about the kinds of information they would find useful.

Decision Contexts

Respondents were asked in what kinds of situations and decision contexts they find that information about CHE is needed, desired or is utilized. Respondents were also asked if the current level and quality of information about CHE is satisfactory or not. The responses to the questions provided the following findings.

Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members were asked to identify the types of decisions they have to make in their respective roles which require consideration of CHE. Responses of the two respondent groups (Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members) led to very similar groupings of decision contexts. These groups and a sampling of responses falling within each are listed below.

1. Leadership/management decisions. A number of respondents replied simply that situations arise as part of their job when they need information about CHE. Some examples of the replies they provided include:

   - o General oversight of CHE program as with all programs on campus. Decisions regarding effectiveness, appropriateness, efficient use of funds. [President/Dean]
   - o As a trustee, I have to evaluate college activities in terms of how well they fulfill the college mission. [Trustee/Board Member]
   - o Decisions regarding how to act on recommendations made by the President and Cabinet. [Trustee/Board Member]

2. Organizational decisions. Some respondents stated that when they have to make decisions regarding overall organizational philosophy, structure and direction, they have found a need for information regarding CHE. Some of their responses are as follows:

   - o Setting institutional philosophy. [President/Dean]
   - o Decisions in which I have to work with CHE leaders to form a united front when we expand our offerings to nontraditional students, offer more degree-completion programs, offer satellite centers, etc. [President/Dean]
   - o Decisions regarding the expansion of CHE and/or the institution. [Trustee/Board Member]
   - o Decisions to prioritize resources based on goals. [Trustee/Board Member]
   - o Decisions regarding organizational structure. [Trustee/Board Member]

3. Staffing decisions. A number of respondents take an active part in decisions regarding the staffing levels and even the hiring of individual staff persons. Some of their responses:

- o Decisions regarding staff allocations. [President/Dean]
- o Decisions regarding staffing and new staff decisions. [President/Dean]
- o Addition of new staffing. [Trustee/Board Member]

4. Financial and budgetary decisions. Responses reflected the fact that most respondents must make financial decisions which include decisions impacting CHE programs:

   - o Budgeting allocations. [President/Dean]
   - o Decisions based on cost-benefit and cost-impact. [Trustee/Board Member]
   - o Decisions based on total financial picture and product mix. [Trustee/Board Member]

5. Programming decisions. As would be expected, respondents are involved in making decisions about the types, level and variety of programming which the institution and CHE departments make available to consumer groups.

   - o Decisions that require identification of the actual needs in the service area and the programming to match needs. [President]
   - o Conduct of background work to make decisions regarding the need for suggested and new programming. [Trustee/Board Member]
   - o Decisions involving approval of different curriculum and programs. [Trustee/Board Member]

A respondent in the President/Dean group and one in the Trustee/Board Member group noted that information about CHE was also needed for purposes of marketing the institution, including CHE programs, to the community.

One respondent indicated that the institution operates on a decentralized basis in which the President rarely would make decisions regarding CHE programs or activities. Operating under this philosophy, the President would only make very critical decisions involving CHE, or intervene in crisis situations.

Information Currently Received

Respondents in the President/Dean and Trustee/Board Member groups were asked to identify the types of information about CHE and its operation that they currently receive on a regular basis.

Responses of Presidents/Deans

President/Dean respondents reported receiving the following information:

- Enrollment data for evening and weekend classes;
- Data on business and industry contracts;
- Detailed expense reports from CHE;
- Monthly reports of CHE activities;
- Data breakdowns by CHE program (e.g., number of students, revenues, costs, etc.);
- Schedules of courses;
- Identification of difficulties and obstacles experienced by program operators;

Respondents most frequently identified CHE enrollment, expense and revenue data as information they receive on a regular basis.

When asked how useful and/or helpful the information received has been to him or her, each of the nine President/Dean respondents replied that it very useful and even critical to their ability to manage the institution.

Of interest also was one respondent's comment that he regularly receives information about the general economic environment in which his institution operates. He receives information regarding new industries moving into the area, new technology and professional literature related to education and training. The respondent noted that this information is critical in formulating institutional responses to the economic environment of the community. This suggests that background, needs sensing and environmental scanning information may be valuable to strategic decision makers related to CHE if the information is relevant and formatted in a "user friendly" manner.

Some of their assessments of the utility of the information they current receive include:

- Vital....College should be responsive and has need of educating itself before it can respond.
- Very useful - helps direct activities.
- Very useful. Helps keep the President abreast of what is going on. Helps him with selling to potential markets, helps sell the college as a whole.

- Enrollments reports are quite helpful. We know there is an interest in expanded programs - we need to find ways to get our institution to meet these needs.
- It's critical.

Responses of Trustees/Board Members

Trustee/Board Member respondents were also asked what information related to CHE they receive on a regular basis. They report receiving:

- Reports from the President's Office;
- CHE enrollment data;
- Written and oral reports from faculty members;
- Program and course offerings;
- CHE class schedules;
- Brochures and reports from CHE departments;
- Reports prepared for or from Board meetings.

The most frequent types of information received by respondents were reports from the President, enrollment data and Board reports.

In assessing the utility of the information currently received, Trustees/Board Members made the following comments:

- Very useful.
- Heightens awareness of program initiatives and forms means of updating Board Members on what is happening in CHE for business and industry. Makes us more knowledgeable about programs when queried by constituents.
- It tells me and others about the market for CHE and where the needs are growing.
- Very useful, especially when not on campus on a regular basis.
- Information has been helpful in tailoring speeches for various audiences

Two respondents did note that they received an overabundance of information and one of these said that any more information would be a nuisance. In general, however, Trustee/Board Member respondents appear to value information that helps them understand CHE operations and activities and informs their decision making.

One respondent repeated receiving only a schedule of the continuing education course offerings. This individual has a desire to obtain much more information about CHE programs at the campus.

Respondents' Information Needs

Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members were asked to describe any situations during the past year in which specific information regarding CHE would have helped him or her to assess decision alternatives or to better deliberate about some issue. These respondents were also asked to identify the types of information about CHE that would have helped their deliberations in these situations.

It is important to note that in discussing information needs, several of the Trustee/Board Member respondents pointed out that it is difficult to know what you need when you do not know what is available. The implication is that these respondents either do not know enough about CHE operations and programs to know what information they need, or do not know what kinds of data on CHE operations could be made available to them. This is a significant point because it suggests that these respondents are "targets of opportunity" for information about the importance of and needs of CHE vis a vis other campus components.

Again, Presidents and Deans and Trustees and Board Members were similar in the groupings of responses that emerged from their responses.

Need for Financial Information. President/Dean respondents identified a need for:

- Improved income/expense information
- Profitability figures
- Comparative data on costs and pricing.

Two Trustee/Board Member respondents identified a financial information need - that of getting earlier information on State of Ohio budget cuts affecting postsecondary education, and information required for the Governor's Task Force report on higher education, which the campus was formulating.

Two legislators identified the need for "statistical data on finances" and data on the "costs of higher education" pertinent to CHE. A third legislator noted that information is needed on the "pros and cons" of tuition caps and how tuition caps affect 2-year institutions.

Thus, the financial information needs identified by respondents concentrated on the need for data that will help them assess the comparative cost-effectiveness of CHE and of modes of delivering diverse CHE programs and services.

Need for Programming Information. Another area in which respondents in each of the three groups identified information needs was that of CHE programming, i.e., the area of decisions regarding product-service mix or what the CHE curriculum will offer.

Moreover, the information need most heavily emphasized was that of needs assessment information. Information regarding both the education and training needs of business and industry and of individuals in the community was identified by respondents as an important need. Thus, the following comments were provided:

- Due to the recession, area companies have had to lay off employees. If we had known this, we could have been proactive to soften the blow. We could do this through skill assessment, counseling, education and training. [President/Dean]

- Eager to see what other community colleges are doing for their service areas. There is not a network to provide storing of such information. [President/Dean]

- Need more interchanges with local business and industry to see what they need. [Trustee/Board Member]

- Need to know what's new in the field of business and industry to design new programming. [Trustee/Board Member]

It should be noted that in responses to questions about the mission and roles to be served by CHE, respondents across the three groups heavily emphasized that CHE should be serving the educational needs of the community both in terms of the needs of individual residents and in terms of the needs of community organizations and groups such as professionals. When combined with the comments regarding information needs for programming, the implication emerges that there is a significant need to collect community wide needs assessment, to collect data regarding current consumption patterns of CHE students, to collect data on the match between current programming and identified needs and need levels, and to collect data on the outcomes of attempts to use programming to meet community needs.

Obviously, establishing a data collection system to inform such issues would be a costly affair. Moreover, such a system would need to collect data on all or most institutional activities, not just those of CHE. Thus, it would require a considerable commitment of resources, time and energy on the part of the parent institution and not just CHE departments or units.

Nevertheless, the researcher will suggest that such information is vital for any attempt to heighten awareness of the importance of CHE vis a vis other educational priorities. In short, it would seem that these kind of data, i.e., data regarding need, CHE programming and outcomes, are critical for "marketing" CHE to strategic stakeholders who allocate resources for and impact the structure and content of CHE programs. Moreover, as one legislator noted, CHE needs to put enrollment data out in front of the community since communities are unaware of how many people utilize CHE.

Legislators were asked what kinds of information requests they receive from constituents that relate to CHE. Four of the seven respondents indicated that they had never received such a request or received one only rarely. The three remaining legislators reported receiving requests for information concerning:

- Tuition caps

- Affordability of CHE

- Communication skills in higher education

- Availability of programs for people unable to enter the institution as a traditional student

- Sources of funds to advance education.

The legislator who said he/she had received information requests regarding funds for education also stated that some of these were from business and industry. In those cases, the business and industry entities were referred to OITP, JTPA and the Ohio Department of Development. The researcher found it interesting that the legislator did not mention making any referrals to local CHE programs.

Last but not least, several respondents noted that there is at present, no statewide, uniform system for reporting on costs, enrollments and other data for higher education. This makes it difficult if not impossible to make data-based decisions in which comparative analyses are required.

Need for Enrollment and Class Offerings Information. While a number of Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members stated that they currently receive information about CHE enrollments, course enrollments and course offerings, several stated that they did not receive any of this information or did so in an infrequent manner. Information regarding the extent to which classes are being utilized to the maximum and the level of demand for particular programs and classes over time were also identified as information needs.

One Trustee/Board Member reported a need for information on the services provided by different institutions and a concern about the lack of coordination among providers of continuing education. This person also was interested in OCHEA and did not know of OCHEA's existence.

Also, a legislator noted that during discussion of a recent bill, he would have found useful not just the number of CHE hours that general practitioners take on average but also in what courses they take these hours. While this respondent was pointing to a very specific information need, his comment may have wider applicability, i.e., it would appear that there may be frequent occasions when information regarding the type and level of programming used by students and subgroups of students could be helpful in planning future programming.

Another comment from a legislator stated that information is needed regarding the number of high school graduates who go on to postsecondary education. By implication, it would seem to be desirable to know what kinds of postsecondary education are attended by high school graduates as well as the kinds of programming selected by students in degree and nondegree programs.

Need for Information Regarding The Outcomes of CHE Programs and Services

In developing the interview protocols for respondent groups, it was decided that a separate question should be devoted to asking what types of information about the outcomes or effects of CHE programs and services would be helpful to respondents. Decision makers are increasingly becoming aware of the need to assess program impact in resource and program planning. Thus, it was considered important to identify if respondent groups want to know more about the impact of CHE and if so, what it is they want to know.

Responses did group around some identifiable areas discussed below.

Educational Outcomes

Several respondents suggested that information on the success of CHE programs in providing education is needed. Success in the program can be measured in many ways. It might refer to number of students successfully completing the class or program; the number of students who advance in mastery levels of subject matters and skills; the number of students who proceed to next course sequence; and comparison of score distributions to those expected and/or to similar programs in other institutions. Another measure of educational outcomes is the number of students who move on to a 4-year degree program and longer-term, those who attain the degree.

One Trustee/Board Member also noted that information should be reported on the performance of students who enter CHE programs from 4-year institutions. Presumably such information would address questions like how well they adapt to the new program and how their performance compares to that at their former 4-year institutions.

Several respondents commented that information regarding exceptional and exemplary students would be useful in order for the institution to highlight the quality of CHE programs. Another respondent (Trustee/Board Member) stated that while programs and information are available for students at the top and bottom, little information is available describing what happens to students in the middle "who need to be directed to do something with their lives".

Two respondents noted that outcome information on how CHE has served students enrolled for self-development purposes would be useful. This raises the question of how to go about measuring "success" of personal enrichment and learning to learn types of classes. Given the importance respondents placed on these activities as a major role of CHE, information on the extent to which they serve individual interests and needs might be very useful.

Two respondents addressed a related theme of customer satisfaction. These respondents recommended that CHE programs gather input and critique from the individuals they serve.

Lastly, one respondent noted that more detailed outcome data needs to be generated, for example, outcome data by race, gender and age. This respondent also suggested that information regarding access to CHE be reported by subgroups as well.

Information on Labor Market Outcomes for Participants

Respondents in each of the three groups said they would like to see more information regarding labor market outcomes for CHE students. Do CHE students get placed in jobs for which they were trained?

How long do they remain in these jobs? Do CHE students gain promotions in their chosen careers? These are just some of the possible labor market outcomes for which information could be collected and used in program planning and marketing. However, two respondents (Trustees/Board Members) did note that they are already receiving adequate information on the job placement outcomes of students.

One respondent suggested that in addition to employer surveys, surveys of employees who were former CHE students should also be conducted to identify the ways in which they think CHE has impacted their employability.

Outcomes for Business and Industry

Another area of needed outcome information identified by respondents is data on the outcomes of CHE programs and services to business and industry. Some examples of responses include:

- Comprehensive assessment of training effectiveness in industries. [President]
- Did training help the company? Did the training achieve its objectives? [President]
- The bottom line is "does our continuing higher education make a difference in the workplace in terms of productivity?" Sometimes we ask the question but the results are not analyzed formally. [Trustee/Board Members]
- We need outcome data focusing on changes that have occurred, e.g., did company expand because of better workforce; did company locate here because of college; has product quality improved because of better trained workforce. [Trustee/Board Members]
- Need to document more employers' rates of training, how they benefitted in dollars and cents, and did they obtain better performance and more of a work ethic among employees. [Trustee/Board Members]

As noted earlier, service to business and industry is considered by respondents (especially Presidents/Deans and Trustees/Board Members) as being an important component of the mission of CHE as well as that of the parent institution. Therefore, it is not surprising that respondents would indicate that more information is needed on the extent to which CHE is providing the products and services which meet the needs of the private sector.

Moreover, the responses above indicate that respondents want more than simply figures on how many employees are trained in CHE programs. They want data that relates to employers' perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of the training and the long-term impact that training and trained employees have on the company.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

This section provides a brief overview of the major findings that emerged from the survey regarding the needs of strategic stakeholders for information about continuing higher education.

1. Presidents and Deans report being most familiar with: (1) credit programs delivered through regular credit departments in the institution, and (2) with those CHE programs that deliver employment-related education and training and/or delivered assistance and training to business and industry.

2. Trustees and Board Members reported being most familiar with those components of CHE that deliver services to business and industry and to individuals in need of employment-related education and training.

3. Legislators split evenly between those who feel fairly to very familiar with CHE operations and activities in their districts and those who do not feel familiar with CHE.

4. Legislators stated that typically the individuals who enroll in CHE do so for purposes of self-development and self-enrichment or to better prepare themselves for the labor market.

5. Most legislators were unable to provide any form of estimate regarding the number of individuals in their districts who are enrolled in CHE programs.

6. In discussions regarding perceived roles of CHE, respondents frequently identified CHE in organizational terms, i.e., as being the set of activities and programs operated by a particular unit within the parent organization or those operated by the organization as a whole.

7. A number of respondents also defined CHE in terms of what it is not rather than what it is. Thus, they indicated that CHE should meet the educational needs of the community that are not presently met by traditional 4-year degree programs.

8. Collectively, respondents in each of the three groups described a wide range of roles and functions which CHE does and should serve in communities. The most heavily emphasized roles were that of serving the educational and training needs of present and future labor market participants, and the role of increasing access by providing different types and forms of programs.

   The major missions and roles identified by respondents included:

   - Providing individuals with opportunities for job training, retraining and upgrading of job skills.

   - Serving the needs of business and industry in the areas of employee training, transfer of technology, and business management.

   - Providing credit and noncredit programs to students who cannot or who choose not to enroll in traditional college programs and broadening access to education by providing instruction off campus, in community settings and during nontraditional hours, e.g., evenings and weekends.

   - Providing individuals with a source of personal enrichment and life long learning.

- o Respondents also indicated that CHE should serve the needs of the community at large, e.g., training and certification for professional groups and education for public service and social service organizations and for public officials.

9. Respondents also noted that CHE serves parent institutions by bringing in funds. CHE does this by either increasing enrollments in its own programs or in other programs and through contracts with business and industry.

10. Legislators state that the current and future needs of individuals in their districts are primarily those related to obtaining job training, retraining and/or upgrading of job skills.

11. Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members were generally agreed that CHE is an integral and important component of parent institutions. However, some respondents feel that their institutions need to give higher priority to CHE to meet future educational needs of their communities.

12. Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members identified the following as typical decision contexts in which they need information about CHE operations and activities:

    1. Leadership and management decisions;
    2. Organizational decisions;
    3. Staffing decisions;
    4. Financial and budgetary decisions;
    5. Programming decisions.

13. Presidents and Deans stated that they receive enrollment, expense and revenue information related to CHE on a regular basis. They also said that this information is critical to their being able to make decisions in the areas described above.

14. Trustee and Board Members most frequently identified reports from the President's Office, Board reports and enrollment data as information received on a regular basis. Most respondents also agreed that this information is very helpful to them in carrying out their assigned responsibilities.

15. Presidents, Deans, Trustees and Board Members stated that the most important information needs they have are for data related to the comparative cost-effectiveness of CHE programs, the type and level of educational needs of stakeholders in the community, the extent to which current CHE programs meet these needs, and more detailed and refined enrollment data.

16. Throughout the interviews, respondents raised the issue of the need for program and outcome evaluation information regarding CHE activities. When asked what kinds of outcome data they think is most important to obtain, their replies grouped around the following themes:

    - o More detailed information on educational outcomes including intermediate outcomes that relate to students' progress in their programs.

    - o More detailed information on the labor market outcomes of CHE participants.

- The outcomes of CHE services to business and industry including impact on the long-term productivity of their companies.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Below is a brief discussion of the issues and implications surrounding some of the more important and interesting findings obtained from the survey.

Issues Related to Questions of Role

Meta-Role Issues

Earlier it was reported that respondents frequently defined the role of CHE in organizational terms, i.e., as the set of programs and activities performed by a particular unit or department within the parent institution or as the full set of activities undertaken by the institution as a whole. Moreover, respondents also frequently prescribed the role to CHE of serving whatever educational needs of the community that are not being served by traditional 4-year degree programs.

The researcher suggests that these types of replies may reflect an uncertainty on the part of respondents as to how to address the question of CHE's role more substantively. Thus, defining CHE in organizational terms does not really address the question of what role should be served by CHE. It implies that CHE has no content areas or core unifying attributes that render it distinctive as an educational treatment. Similarly, the definition of CHE as being anything and everything that traditional 4-year degree education is not implies that CHE is a catch-all and has no substance or core around which a distinctive identity can be forged.

After talking with OCHEA members and reviewing literature pertaining to CHE, the researcher can empathize with anyone attempting to pin down CHE as a particular subject matter or educational function. On the other hand, it does appear that CHE is constituted by a number of defined content areas, subject matters and cross-disciplinary activities. Thus, for example, CHE may encompass training for auxiliary health professions, training in social service administration, training for life management skills, and education for computer literacy.

Thus, it would seem that one task which OCHEA members might consider is some form of planning process that clarifies these content areas and functional areas and begins the task of providing them with definitions that can in turn be used to inform strategic audiences about what constitutes the broader domain of CHE.

CHE and Economic Development

In reviewing the findings related to role questions, it appears that to the extent respondents defined CHE in substantive or concrete terms, they often did so in terms of providing education and training services to labor market participants, business and industry. Indeed, some respondents even defined CHE in terms of this role to the exclusion of others. This may be due in part to the mix of institutions which agreed to take part in the research study.

Surprisingly, though a few respondents did point out the potential relation of CHE to economic development efforts, most respondents did not identify a specific role for CHE in this domain. This was surprising in the sense that they appear to see CHE as being a primary resource for job training and human resource development.

In some states (e.g., Mississippi and Connecticut), higher education generally and units providing business and industry more particularly, are considered integral and essential actors in collaborative efforts to stimulate the statewide and local economies. In doing so, these entities have received high visibility at the state level and are valued accordingly by numerous state and local opinion leaders.

Despite the clarity with which respondents see CHE's role in job training, their responses do not reflect a vision of CHE as significantly contributing to comprehensive strategies for the promotion of economic development. Indeed, one legislator remarked that his office has received requests for information regarding sources of funds for training business and industry employees. In listing where these requests are referred, the mention of CHE programs or institutions on the list was conspicuously absent.

OCHEA may well consider exploring the ways in which CHE can contribute to economic development in the larger scheme of things and the extent to which its potential is currently being used in the state. The resulting information might be very helpful in reinforcing the vision and image of CHE as a primary partner in economic development efforts.

CHE and Personal Enrichment

While respondents placed some importance on the role of CHE in serving the needs of individuals for personal enrichment, they did not appear to have a substantive image of who uses CHE for these purposes or of the ways in which CHE serves these needs. Indeed, it could be argued that personal enrichment is a potential outcome of any and all educational experiences and not a distinguishing characteristic of CHE.

Some continuing educators might find it a positive thing that strategic groups and consumers perceive all of CHE to serve the needs or desires for personal enrichment. However, the evaluators believe there is some risk in allowing this role for CHE to remain so vague and nebulous. If personal enrichment is an important role to be served by CHE, then it would be expected that stakeholder groups would have a clear idea of the concrete benefits and outcomes that result from personal enrichment activities. The only benefits or outcomes identified in this area by respondents were those of increased capacity to manage one's life and personal satisfaction in one's ability to learn. While the latter is fairly specific, the former is as vague as the concept of personal enrichment.

The problem is that while "personal enrichment" sounds good in a rhetorical and philosophical vein, it may actually carry very little weight in concrete decision making contexts, e.g., decisions about staff, programs and funding. In short, it is extremely difficult to market or request support for that which you cannot define.

Consequently, the evaluators recommend that OCHEA members consider working together to elucidate and give more substance to the role and goal of personal enrichment or personal development and to more clearly define the role which CHE serves in helping individuals progress toward personal enrichment. Moreover, the effort to ground personal enrichment in a more substantive and meaningful base should be approached from at least two perspectives. The first is identifying some of the areas of human capacity and activity that can and should be "enriched" and then, relating these areas to subject matters taught through CHE. The second perspective is that of defining the concrete outcomes that derive from personal enrichment.

The Modern Need for CHE

Finally, the researcher suggests that there is currently real concern regarding how the rapid technological and knowledge changes will affect our social, cultural and familial values and patterns. The suggestion is that life long learning is becoming a social necessity and not simply a question of individual desire. Transformations in the natural environment, in family structures, in communication patterns, in health hazards and in financial markets are but some of the areas about which individuals are increasingly coming to need more information and knowledge to maintain quality of life. Moreover, transformations are occurring at such a rapid rate that knowledge becomes obsolete much sooner that it did fifty years ago. The implication is that there are an increasing number of domains in which individuals need ongoing education.

Legislators who participated in this survey indicated some awareness of the need for continuing education, particularly in the area of job skill training. However, OCHEA members might do well to consider in detail the unique contributions which CHE can make to serving a broader range of educational needs arising from today's technological, social and cultural change. Moreover, state and community opinion leaders and groups need to be informed of both the necessity for nontraditional forms of ongoing education and the capacity of CHE to provide such education.

Issues Related to Information Needs

In reviewing responses to questions about information needs, Presidents and Deans and Trustees and Board Members largely believe that they are receiving relevant and useful information about CHE operations on their respective campuses. What is equally clear is that legislators are neither requesting or receiving much in the way of information about CHE.

Moreover, several respondents indicated that it is difficult to know what you need if you do not know what information is available. More to the point perhaps is the fact that it is difficult to know what is needed when you are uncertain as to what are the relevant questions to ask.

These observations point to two implications. First, there remains a need for continuing educators to clarify the mission, purposes, roles, etc. which particular domains or sets of programs in CHE are intended to fulfill. Strategic audiences like those interviewed in this study then need this information provided to them in a way that frames for them an integrative vision or image of CHE domains. Only then does it begin to get clear what information beyond enrollments and cost data are important. Moreover, it is only then that the criteria used in deliberating about and making strategic decisions, (e.g., resource allocation and organizational restructuring decisions) be based on something more sophisticated than a "numbers game".

Indeed, while respondents did not initially identify outcome data as a significant information need, when asked specifically what kinds of outcome data on CHE programs they think would be useful, they collectively produced a fairly extensive list. Not surprisingly, this list included outcomes reflecting the more substantive roles assigned to CHE noted earlier in this report. Thus, respondents stated they would like to see outcomes related to:

- The labor market outcomes of individuals receiving job and skill training in CHE programs;
- Outcomes related to CHE's impact on the productivity and quality of production of business and industry receiving CHE services;

- o The educational outcomes of individuals enrolled in credit and noncredit programs in CHE;

- o Educational and life outcomes to individuals as a result of having accessible CHE programs to attend;

- o Outcomes related to the personal enrichment, personal development and/or life management skills attained by individuals through CHE.

Please note that each of these areas of outcomes can be further broken out into subsets of diverse employment, educational and life outcomes to CHE consumers.

The researcher suggests also that an implicit theme running throughout the analysis of survey responses is the need for the collection of detailed information about the needs of major consumer or target groups for CHE programs and services. Many of respondents' assumptions and claims about CHE logically require an in-depth and comprehensive picture of occupational, employment, educational, accessibility and personal life needs. Yet, not one respondent identified needs data among the list of information they receive from CHE programs. Several respondents did mention needs assessment information among the types of impact information they would like to receive.

It seems to the researcher that needs assessment information is more of a priority for CHE programs than it is for other types of postsecondary educational forms. One of the primary assumptions underlying the provision of CHE is that of being responsive to the needs and wants for education and training of major consumer groups. This assumption drives the claim of respondents that CHE does and should respond to the educational needs of communities, individuals and organizations that are not met in traditional 4-year postsecondary degree programs. The point is that few individuals or organizations feel they have to attend CHE programs in the way students feel they have to graduate from high school or get a degree in college.

Given that consumers have choices about whether or not CHE will meet their education and training needs, it seems only logical that beyond marketing activities, CHE programs should be conducting routine needs sensing and assessment activities. Moreover, it is emphasized that outcome data are given much more power and meaningfulness when there are needs data to serve as background. Thus, for example, an outcome finding that 95% of individuals aged 30 to 45 completed courses in CHE programs and found placements in alternative careers takes on new meaning when it is interpreted against the finding that large numbers of individuals in this age group in the community state they would change careers if they could receive affordable and accessible retraining.

The researcher will also note that venturing into the realm of collecting needs and outcome data incurs risks as well as benefits. Data collection and analysis can be costly and if poorly done, can result in a loss of credibility in not only the data findings but in the sponsors of the studies. Moreover, once a demand for needs and outcome data has been "created", it is possible that these data will become a requirement placed on CHE programs by administrators. Most importantly, the more interested internal and external audiences become in needs and outcome information, the higher the risk is that the original sponsors will lose control of the ways in which these data are utilized. The researcher is in no way suggesting that the risks outweigh the benefits of these information collection efforts. Rather, it is to emphasize the importance of ensuring that serious attention is paid to what is wanted and how data findings may be used by multiple parties.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS AND VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWERS

Institution	Interviewer
Columbus State Community College	John Meighan
Edison State Community College	Roger Hegstrom
Jefferson Technical College	Tracee Joltes
Kent State University	Judy Hirschman
Marietta College	George Banziger
North Central Technical College	Reese Clemens
Ohio University	Muriel Ballou
The Ohio State University-Lima and Lima Technical College	Carol Fasig
Raymond Walters College, University of Cincinnati	Leslie Heaton
Washington State Community College	Susan Berry

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Version II.

OCHEA STUDY ON INFORMATION NEEDS OF STRATEGIC AUDIENCES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENTS/TRUSTEES/BOARD MEMBERS

Interviewer:_____ Respondent:_____

TO INTERVIEWER: The first question asks for identification of the perceptions of the respondent regarding what continuing higher education is and what it does. Do not cue or lead the respondent in any way. If the respondent asks what is meant by continuing higher education, simply state that it means different things to different people and we want the respondent to share with us whatever it is be or she thinks of when continuing higher education is discussed.

1. How would you respond if someone asked you what continuing higher education is or does on your campus?

2. With which component of continuing higher education on this campus are you most familiar or knowledgeable?

   a. How do you come to be more knowledgeable about or familiar with this component?

3. What mission(s) do you think continuing higher education should be serving on this campus?

4. How do you see this mission for continuing higher education fitting into or relating to the broader educational mission of this institution?

5. Describe some of the concrete benefits you expect continuing higher education to provide:

Follow-up probes: If the respondent does not identify any benefits pertinent to the following groups, probe with these:

(a) To constituents in your district:

(b) To business and industry in your district:

(c) Other organizations in your district:

6. What types of decisions do you have to make in your capacity as (president, provost, trustee, Board member) that require your consideration of continuing higher education?

7. Describe any situations during the past year in which specific information regarding continuing higher education would have helped you to assess decision alternatives or to deliberate about some issue?

a. What types of information about continuing higher education would have helped you in these particular situations?

8. What information do you currently receive on a regular basis about continuing higher education regarding its operation, e.g., enrollment figures, information on educational offerings, etc.

a. How useful has this information been to you?

9. Describe any other information about continuing higher education activities and/or impact that you do not currently receive but would find useful?

10. What types of information about the outcomes or effects of continuing higher education might be helpful to you in considering issues related to this institution?

Version II.

OCHEA STUDY ON INFORMATION NEEDS OF STRATEGIC AUDIENCES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

Interviewer:_____ Respondent:_____

TO INTERVIEWER: The first question asks for identification of the perceptions of the respondent regarding what continuing higher education is and what it does. Do not cue or lead the respondent in any way. If the respondent asks what is meant by continuing higher education, simply state that it means different things to different people and we want the respondent to share with us whatever it is be or she thinks of when continuing higher education is discussed.

1. Describe what comes to mind when someone asks "What do continuing education programs at higher education institutions offer the community?

2. How familiar are you with the types of activities performed by continuing higher education programs at postsecondary institutions in your district?

   1. Very familiar _____
   2. Fairly familiar _____
   3. Only somewhat familiar _____
   4. Not at all familiar _____

3. What are the characteristics of the persons served by continuing higher education?

a. Do you have any sense of how many individuals are enrolled in continuing higher education in your district?

4. What types of continuing education needs do you think adults in your constituency currently have or will have in the near future?

a. What role do you think continuing higher education at institutions in your district should serve in addressing these needs?

5. Describe the concrete benefits you expect continuing higher education to provide:

Follow-up probes: If the respondent does not identify any benefits pertinent to the following groups, probe with these:

(a) To constituents in your district:

(b) To business and industry in your district:

(c) Other organizations in your district:

6. Describe any situations that you as a legislator have confronted in which more or better information about continuing higher education may have helped you in deliberating about some educational issue.

   a. What types of information would have helped you in these situations?

7. Have you ever requested your staff to gather information about any aspect of continuing higher education?

   a. What types of questions led to the request for information gathering?

b. Were your staff able to identify helpful and usable information that addressed your questions?

c. If not, what problems did your staff confront in gathering relevant and usable information about continuing higher education?

8. What types of requests for information have you received from constituents regarding continuing higher education?

9. What types of information on the outcomes or effects of continuing higher education might be helpful to you in considering educational issues?

APPENDIX C
RELATED READINGS:

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